

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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LIVING CONDITIONSConsumer Goods

1. There was an enormous improvement in living conditions in the Kuybyshev area  especially after the 1947 currency reform. Post currency-reform price reductions also played an important role in cutting food prices, but had little effect on the price of clothing and durable consumer goods. 25X1
2. However, the last two price reductions effected  had only nominal results. The prices of bread and other basic food products were reduced when the laws were first introduced, but scarcely one month 25X1

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later slowly began to rise to their former level. The only substantial price reductions affected goods which were seldom used, [redacted]

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[redacted] the only goods which were really affected by the 1951 price reduction law (those not subject to later price increases) were expensive, durable consumer goods which few people could afford, such as radios and furniture.

3. The Soviet population naturally reacted favorably to lower food prices and greater availability of consumer goods and were aware of the great improvement in living conditions brought about since the end of the war. However, the average Soviet citizen was also acutely conscious of the fact that living standards of 1950 were still far below standards prevailing before World War II. They were not deceived by government propaganda and statistics. [redacted]

[redacted] as long as they could not buy bread for 40 kopeks as in 1939, then they could not believe in Soviet propaganda claiming that the prewar standard of living had been regained or surpassed. [redacted]

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#### Housing

4.

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5.

[redacted] There were qualitative as well as quantitative differences in housing allotted to the Soviet intelligentsia and Soviet workers. Working-class families received one room per family in wooden buildings located in the settlement which were equipped with neither central heating nor running water. Soviet engineers and other managerial personnel were quartered in brick apartment buildings [redacted] which were furnished with central heating, plumbing, and indoor toilets, to say nothing of being more spacious. Some nechalniki and their families were the sole occupants of entire apartments.

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6. Class, and not income differences, was the deciding factor in this question. Soviet employees assigned living quarters in the far more desirable brick apartment buildings included only those who had the equivalent of a higher education or were members of the old intelligentsia who occupied positions equivalent in responsibility to jobs held by university graduates, although they themselves had had no higher education. All other Soviets - workers, foremen, office employees, etc. - were consigned to the wooden buildings, although it was entirely possible that a skilled worker earned as much if not more than a young engineer.

7. Later on, numerous prefabricated houses [redacted] were erected in the workers' settlement of Upravlencheskiy. These diminutive houses,

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designed for one family [redacted]

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[redacted] Although they were very small and equipped with neither running water nor central heating, they were very much sought after by workers and engineers alike. The privacy of a private house, something almost unheard of in the Soviet Union, was the desirable feature which caused so much excitement.

#### Sanitation and Medical Care

8. [redacted] sanitary conditions in the Kuybyshev area, by the Soviets' unconcern for the most elementary sanitary measures. No effort was made to preserve the cleanliness of food sold in open markets and shops. Blue clouds of flies swarmed about meat sold in public markets, which lay uncovered in the hot summer sun. They even sold some cheese and meat in the local magazin which had been decimated by rats enjoying a hearty meal.

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9. Medical care and facilities in Kuybyshev were equally filthy and inadequate.

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10.

[redacted]  
in Upravlencheskiy

The polyclinic

[redacted] was simply filthy. No effort was made to keep the ward clean. Facilities were so inadequate that two children frequently had to share one bed.

11. [redacted] treatment was more than complicated by the fact that no penicillin was then available in Kuybyshev. It could only be obtained in Moscow.

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12.

#### SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

##### Privileges Granted to Upper Classes

13. A notable feature of the Soviet class structure was the preferential treatment accorded to upper income groups, to the intelligentsia. This was reflected in many seemingly petty ways as well as in such basic matters as housing, already noted. For example, when scarce goods were placed on sale at the local magazin, the Soviet nachalniki either barged up to the head of the line which inevitably formed, or else had their orders delivered to their apartments. Or, again, the Soviet bosses never collected wood in the forest themselves at the time when wood was distributed but had plant trucks do the job for them. And when electricity was shut off during certain periods of

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the day in order to conserve power supplies, they continued to receive electricity in their apartments while others sat in the darkness.

14. It is also a well-known fact that the various high income groups in the Soviet Union were given preferential treatment under the former rationing system. Children of wealthier families were also favored in educational opportunities, in that they could more readily afford payment of tuitions charged by Soviet higher educational institutions. However,

university scholarships, were awarded on a strictly merit basis.

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15. The payment of higher wages to engineers and managerial personnel was considered perfectly normal by Soviet workers. However, the fact that their bosses received so many privileges in addition to higher pay, the fact that the nachalniki lived on such a distinctly higher social plane, caused discontent and complaining on the part of the workers at Plant No. 2. On one occasion the workers were particularly vocal in expressing their disapproval when, after standing in line for several hours to buy a kilogram of sugar, a militia man appeared and made room at the head of the line for a nachalnik. The sales girl, too, knew which side her bread was buttered on and immediately dropped her current customer in order to service the nachalnik's wants. However, on the whole there was not too much open complaining by the Soviet population, as that is a practice which could prove dangerous. The average Soviet worker adopted a fatalistic attitude about the daily problems which he had to face.

#### Religion

16. Although there was no church in the newly constructed workers' settlement of Upravlencheskiy, three churches were open and functioning in the nearby city of Kuybyshev. Most of the other churches in Kuybyshev were used as warehouses.

17. Services were held regularly every Sunday.

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Although it is true that the capacity of these three churches was small in comparison to the total population of Kuybyshev, interest in religion was by no means dead in the USSR. almost 70% of those attending church were young people, young men and women from 15 to 30 years of age. Entire families were in attendance: father, mother, and children. Old women and other people normally considered church-goers were in the minority.

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18. This was not a unique occurrence,

no explanation of this interest in religion on the part of the younger generation except perhaps that the church offered a convenient shelter for those young people who were confronted with the depressing realities of Soviet life upon reaching maturity.

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19. never religious holidays, weddings, or funerals by the local Soviet population. On several occasions burials were nothing more than Party ceremonies. The coffin was draped with a red flag, a band played appropriate music, and the honor guard fired a salute. These ceremonies were probably in honor of deceased Party members or old soldiers.

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Crime and Corruption

23. Although murder and other major crimes were by no means uncommon in Kuybyshev, petty thievery was no less than rampant there. Pickpocketing was the most common form of thievery and generally effected by that artful instrument, the razor blade.

24. The Soviets claimed that Kuybyshev was the world capital for pickpockets. [redacted] this claim must remain unchallenged, in view of the skill of the local thieves. Pickpocketing was of course most common in places where people congregated: streetcars, public markets, and general stores. A piece of a razor blade hidden under a fingernail was enough to cut open a suit to get at a billfold or to cut the band of a wristwatch while the victim had no idea as to what was transpiring. Thieves even used wire cutters to sever a briefcase from its handle while the owner was walking in a crowd. The victim would not realize that he was carrying nothing more than the handle until minutes after the crime had been committed. Most of this thievery, this pickpocketing, was committed by children from six years on up, usually 10 to 15 years old.

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25. The Soviet population considered this situation quite normal, at least nothing to get excited about. The militia was completely incapable of coping with the problem and frequently did their best to ignore it. [redacted] witnessed a man robbed in broad daylight on a Kuybyshev street. A passer-by brought this to the attention of a nearby militia man after the victim had cried for help. But the militia man simply shrugged his shoulders and said, "Nichego".

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26. There were numerous beggars on the streets of Kuybyshev. [redacted] No apparent decrease in their number set in after the currency reform. They usually congregated near market places or magazines. They were found by the hundreds in the area around large open markets.

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27. Almost all of these beggars were old people, mostly women, including the crippled and blind. They usually addressed a passer-by with some religious phrase when asking for contributions. Some were peddlars of various wares, including numerous fortune tellers and people exhibiting tame mice and hamsters.

28. A person could accomplish anything in the Soviet Union with money. In fact, bribery was the only way to get things done in many cases. There were countless daily examples of bribery and petty corruption at Plant No. 2. For example, a steady stream of inspectors [redacted] checking on electrical installations and fire hazards. These inspectors never intended

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to report violations but simply used the threat of fines as a lever for obtaining bribes. Most bribes were demanded by petty functionaries, who were paid so poorly that they were forced to resort to bribery in order to supplement their meager incomes.

29. Ticket sellers at the railroad station were also in this category, as they received salaries of but 200 or 300 rubles per month. At least half of the tickets which they were supposed to sell to the public were disposed of on the black market at three or four times their face value. This caused an enormous shortage of railroad tickets for the general public. Average Soviet citizens without official connections often had to wait eight days and nights in line in order to buy a railroad ticket. This inconvenience caused many people to board trains without tickets. They hopped a train and bribed the conductor assigned to each car to hold his tongue. He in turn bribed the supervisor who came to check on him. However, illegal travelers also had to contend with frequent checks made by police on passenger trains. They either bribed this third set of officials or were thrown off the train.

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